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NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER KPAL EG IS MEPN

SUBJECT: EGYPT HOSTS PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT AND ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified by ECPO Minister Counselor Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) Playing a central role in post-Hamas victory diplomatic contacts, Egypt hosted Palestinian President Abu Mazen and Israeli Foreign Minister Livni in Cairo February 1. Livni met one-on-one with Mubarak for nearly 2 hours, and was hosted by Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit for a joint press conference and lunch. The Israeli FM met Egyptian Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman before departing for Tel Aviv. According to the Israeli Embassy, Livni's "unprecedented" meeting with Mubarak included efforts to deepen ties in a number of areas to be followed up during visits to Israel by the MFA Chef du Cabinet in February and by Aboul Gheit in March. Palestinian President Abu Mazen also met with Mubarak February 1, as well as with Prime Minister Nazif, Intelligence Chief Soliman, and FM Aboul Gheit the previous evening. Egypt pressed Abu Mazen to insist Hamas publicly accept ending violence toward Israel and adherence to international agreements between Palestinians and Israel before allowing it to form a government. Abu Mazen sought assistance from Arab League Secretary General Amre Moussa to convince Arab leaders to

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provide emergency funding to the Palestinian Authority. We have no indications that Abu Mazen met with any Hamas figures while in Cairo. End summary.

"unprecedented" Israeli visit

¶2. (C) In her first trip outside Israel as Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni met privately in Cairo February 1 with President Mubarak, and attended a lunch hosted by Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit and joined by Egypt's Trade and Oil Ministers, as well as Presidential advisor Dr. Osama al Baz. FM Livni and a senior GOI MFA delegation met last with Intelligence Chief Omar Soliman before returning to Israel. After the visit, Israeli Ambassador Cohen shared with the Ambassador that the Israeli side was "very pleased" with Egypt's handling of the visit, with respect to both substance and tone. Livni's morning meeting with Mubarak (originally scheduled for an hour) lasted two hours. The Aboul Gheit-hosted lunch was preceded by a "very warm" joint press briefing, and the atmosphere of the lunch itself was extremely cordial. Before the meetings began, Intelligence Chief Soliman briefed the Israeli media. Cohen characterized the treatment as "unprecedented", and said the GOI was very pleased with the results.

¶3. (C) Israeli Emboff offered additional details on FM Livni's visit, noting that as the one-on-one meeting with Mubarak continued and the planned expanded meeting did not occur, Livni's delegation and the Egyptian Foreign Minister realized the significance of such an "unprecedented" welcome by Mubarak. The Egyptian President, related Emboff, had made a "huge gesture" in getting to know the new Israeli minister. While uncertain of details of that private conversation, the Emboff suggested that Mubarak had counseled Israel to "take a deep breath" regarding Hamas' electoral victory and let Egypt take a stab at settling things down among the Palestinians.

¶4. (C) According to the Emboff, the Israeli Foreign Minister discussed expanding the bilateral "Common Dialogue Committee" (CDC) with Egypt to touch on topics other than agriculture, QIZs, and security. The Egyptian MFA Chef du Cabinet, Ambassador Wafaa Bassim, would travel to Israel at the end of February to address this issue, and Minister Aboul Gheit would follow in March to "launch" the expanded CDC. Livni had also proposed that the Israeli MFA begin sending its "cadets" to Egypt for short training seminars, as it had once done. Livni also pressed Egypt to tone down its rhetoric and negativity toward Israel in multilateral fora. The Emboff also noted Aboul Gheit's remark during the joint press

conference that "the Roadmap cannot be executed under fire" - something she said had not been said in public before by a senior Egyptian official.

15. (C) Egyptian Intelligence Chief Soliman reportedly implored Israel to "not close the door" on the Palestinians, and let Egypt use its influence to calm the situation. Soliman shared that he had insisted with Abu Mazen that Hamas be given three ultimatums: stop the violence, respect international agreements, and recognize Oslo. These were the conditions that Hamas must meet before forming a government, Soliman reportedly had counseled Abu Mazen.

Visit by President Abu Mazen

16. (C) Palestinian President Abu Mazen, in Cairo January 31 - February 1, met with President Mubarak, Prime Minister Nazif, Intelligence Chief Soliman, and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, among others. Arriving late in the afternoon of January 31, Abu Mazen was hosted at a dinner by Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif, joined by Intelligence Chief Soliman and Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit. The following morning, Abu Mazen met with President Mubarak before heading to Jordan. According to Soliman (septel/notal), Mubarak and senior ministers encouraged Abu Mazen to apply certain core conditions to Hamas before allowing it to form a new government. Those conditions, as Soliman told the Israeli media ahead of the President's meeting with FM Livni, included recognition of Israel, an end to violence, and a commitment to all international agreements signed with Israel.

17. (C) Abu Mazen stayed at the Andalous Palace where he met shortly after his arrival with Palestinian Ambassador Dajani, Arab League Assistant Minister for Palestinian Affairs Mohamed Subeih, and former Arab League Assistant Minister for Palestinian Affairs Said Kamal. Kamal told poloff February 2 that Abu Mazen believes he has a "three month window" in which to test a Hamas government. During this time, Hamas must assure that its ministers are working together with its Israeli counterparts, and must collect weapons from its members. If not, Kamal said, Abu Mazen would dissolve the Cabinet. This three month window, he said, would also allow the PA to see the results of the expected Israeli elections.

18. (C) President Mubarak invited Arab League Secretary General Moussa to join for part of the meeting with Abu Mazen. Abu Mazen briefed Moussa on the latest political developments and described the PA's desperate financial situation. Abu Mazen sought Moussa's intervention with League members to quickly increase financial support to the PA, in order to meet its immediate budgetary needs. Moussa said in a press conference following the meeting that he would undertake to elicit financial support for the PA. Contrary to some media reports, we have no indication Abu Mazen met with either Hamas representatives or with any of Livni's party during his time in Cairo.

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